

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT  
AK-040-02-EA-020

<b>Applicant(s):</b> Steve Morris (AA-78438) P.O. Box 190342 Anchorage, AK 99519	Joel Newton (AA-84079) P.O. Box 87 Iliamna, AK 99606
Chris/Dennis Branham (AA-69980) P.O. Box 190184 Anchorage, AK 99519	Michel Bieri (AA-84081) P.O. Box 208 Seldovia, AK 99663
David Haeg (AA-77018) P.O. Box 123 Soldotna, AK 99669	Dennis Lattery (AA-78670) P.O. Box 770775 Eagle River, AK 99577

**Type of Action:** Special Recreation Permits (Big game guiding)

**Location:** Guide Management Units 09-04 and 09-02  
Iliamna Lake/West side of Cook Inlet Vicinity

**Prepared By:** Dave Doucet

**Preparing Office:** Bureau of Land Management  
Anchorage Field Office  
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Anchorage, Alaska 99507

**Date:** July 12, 2002

I. INTRODUCTION

This Proposed Action involves commercial guiding use of public lands near Lake Iliamna and along the west side of Cook Inlet from Iniskin Peninsula to McNeil Cove. Much of this land has been selected for conveyance by the State of Alaska and Native Corporations. BLM is responsible for management until the land is conveyed. Along navigable streams, BLM maintains management authority only for those lands which are above the ordinary high water mark, and the State of Alaska manages land and waters below that mark. For commercial big game hunting guides, authorization will be only for those lands that the operator is authorized to hunt on by the Big Game Commercial Services Board.

A. Purpose and Need for the Proposed Action:

The Anchorage Field Office has received applications from Steve Morris (AA-78438), Chris/Dennis Branham (AA-69980), David Haeg (AA-77018), Joel Newton (AA-84079), Michel Bieri (AA-84081), and Dennis Lattery (AA-78670), to conduct guided big game hunts on BLM administered lands within Guide Use Area (GUA) 09-04 and 09-02. Other outfitters have shown interest in operating in these two GUAs. To date only six have requested permits. It is reasonable to assume up to two additional outfitters will request authorization to guide in GUA 09-04 in the near future.

Under the principles of the multiple use concept of managing natural resources, the intent of the recreation and tourism goals is to provide a broad spectrum of recreation opportunities for both the resident and nonresident recreating public.

B. Conformance With Land Use Plan:

This action is in conformance with the Southwest Management Framework Plan (MFP) dated November 1981, activity objectives Wildlife (WL-4), Recreation (R-3), and Minerals (M-2). These decisions do not directly address special use permitting, but recognize that hunting, fishing, and trapping are legitimate uses of public land.

C. Relationship to Statutes, Regulations, Policies, Plans or Other Environmental Analyses:

A special recreation permit (SRP) is required for commercial recreation use including big game guiding on public land and water pursuant to 43 CFR 8372 and Handbook H-8372-1. With this regulation, an applicant may be authorized to conduct commercial recreation activities on BLM-administered land. The Authorized Officer may issue SRPs for up to five years subject to annual authorization. The permittee must satisfactorily meet the requirements associated

with the SRP as well as conform with applicable laws and regulations on all other Federal or State administered lands and waters.

Permits from the State of Alaska are required for all services that derive revenue on State lands starting from the first day of occupancy. At a minimum, the applicants must have a State of Alaska Guide Outfitter license to guide in GUA 09-02 and 09-04. Each outfitter is limited to three GUAs per year.

## II. PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES

### A. Proposed Action:

The applicants propose to conduct commercial big game guiding on public lands. The land associated with GUA 09-04 is located on the south side of Lake Iliamna and on the west side of Cook Inlet from Iniskin Peninsula down the coast to McNeil Cove. A typical guided hunt would last ten days and include one guide and two clients totaling 30 additional user days per guided trip. Due to the short bear hunting season (May 10<sup>th</sup> - 25<sup>th</sup>, during the even years and October 1<sup>st</sup> - 21<sup>st</sup>, during the odd years) the number of clients an outfitter books is approximately four. As many as 120 additional user days will occur if two additional outfitters are permitted.

#### Steve Morris, Morris Hunting Co. (AA-78438)

Morris Hunting Company is solely owned by Steven Morris. He has applied to conduct guided brown bear hunting for both the spring and fall hunting seasons in GUA 09-04. Mr. Morris plans on guiding four to six brown bear hunters per year.

He also requested authorization to conduct guided hunts for three to five moose hunters in GUA 09. Base camp is located on private land in Cottonwood Bay. In general, he will hunt within a 15 mile radius of the base camp. Temporary tent spike camps will be used in varied locations. One spike camp has been identified and is located on a ridge line between Moose Lake and Meadow Lake, Seward Meridian, T. 6 S., R. 28 W. Specific locations for other spike camps are identified on maps in the associated case file. The surrounding Native land owners have granted permission to Mr. Morris for his guiding activities. He hires up to three registered assistant guides and does all of his own flying for his operations.

#### Chris/Dennis Branham, Branham Adventures (AA-69980)

The Branham family has operated in this area since 1950. They offer guided brown bear hunting for both the spring and fall hunting seasons. They estimate four brown bear clients. Their main camp is located in GUA 09-04. The location is T. 7 S., R. 26 W., Section 31, Seward Meridian, on the south side of Ursus Cove. This consists of three wall tents, two of which are taken down at the end of

the use season. One wall tent frame remains set up and constructed from existing driftwood with walls and a roof made of durable plastic. Wheeled planes are landed on the beaches in front of the base camp, while float planes land on the lake to the southwest of base camp. All landing sites are on public lands. Storage of materials has been requested at the base camp location. A three wheeler and some kitchen supplies have been left in the field. Five spike camps are utilized and identified on maps within the case file. One of the five spike camps is located on public land near the eastern end of Bruin Bay. A spike camp will only be used depending on the location of game. On BLM administered lands, facilities only include temporary tent camps.

David Haeg, The Bush Pilot Inc. (AA-77018)

Mr. Haeg has applied to conduct guided brown bear hunting for both the spring and fall hunting seasons. He is licensed in GUA 09-04. Mr. Haeg plans on a maximum of six clients. Base camp is located on private land (Haeg's Wilderness Lodge). He has obtained permission from CIRI Native Corporation for use of the adjoining Native lands. Three spike camp facilities have been identified on BLM administered land and are located at T. 4 S., R. 24 W., Section 18; T. 4 S., R. 25 W., Section 3; and T. 4 S., R. 25 W., Section 19. Temporary tent platforms have been requested to be left in the field at these three locations. Specific locations are identified on maps in the associated case file. Mr. Haeg has future plans to offer brown bear viewing and adventure tourism between May 25<sup>th</sup> - September 30<sup>th</sup>. Access is by wheeled plane only (Supercub). Mr. Haeg requests permission to cache items such as camp supplies and tools in 55 gallon drums at his spike camp locations.

Joel Newton, Creek to Peak Outfitters (AA-84079)

Mr. Newton lives and has his base camp in the town of Iliamna. He plans on guiding up to five hunters a year, two moose hunters each fall and three bear hunters each season (spring/fall) on BLM administered land. The spring bear season will be from May 7<sup>th</sup> - May 25<sup>th</sup> on even years and from September 20<sup>th</sup> - October 21<sup>st</sup>, during the odd years. Moose hunting will generally take place from September 1<sup>st</sup> - September 15<sup>th</sup>. He is licensed in GUA 09-02, 09-04, and 17-02 and would like permission to utilize all BLM administered land in GUA 09-04 and 09-02. He has identified a number of spike camp locations on BLM administered lands. Specific locations are identified on maps in the associated case file. Spike camps will be located where game is found which can vary from day to day. Mode of transportation in the field will be on foot or by boat. Transportation to spike camps will be by small plane or boat. Everything that is flown in will be flown out, including human waste. Mr. Newton has

acquired permission to hunt on surrounding Native land. No authorization has been requested to construct temporary tent platforms or leave cached items in the field.

Michel Bieri, PACALASKA (AA-84081)

Mr. Bieri has requested permission to hunt on public land in the Upper Chinitna and Clearwater Creeks within GUA 09-04. Mr. Bieri has received permission to cross Native land to access public land for his guided hunts. He plans on anchoring his 85 foot fishing vessel in Chinitna Bay and running a skiff to the mouths of Chinitna and Clearwater creeks. From there all hunting in the field will be done on foot. He expects three to four clients a year. Specific locations are identified on maps in the associated case file. No authorization has been permitted to construct temporary tent platforms or cache items in the field.

Dennis Lattery (AA-78670)

Mr. Lattery plans on hunting brown bear during the spring and fall season within GUA 09-04. He also may conduct a fall moose hunt in the same area from September 1<sup>st</sup> - 15<sup>th</sup>. He anticipates at least two bear hunters a season. Access to the area is by float plane. Base camp is located on an unnamed lake located at T. 7 S., R. 27 W., Section 4. Specific locations are identified on maps in the associated case file. No storage has been requested. Facilities include two, 4/6 man tents. No fuel is stored on site except for some propane used for cooking. All hunting will be on foot. No authorization has been requested to construct temporary tent platforms or leave cached items in the field.

Two additional guide operations are likely within the next five years. These operations will be similar in that they will guide four to six clients per year. Operations will consist of a base camp with temporary spike camps.

2. No Action Alternative:

The No Action Alternative would be to continue present management and not to allow commercial guiding and outfitting on public lands in GUA 09-04 and 09-02.

III. AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

1. Critical Elements:

It has been determined that the following Critical Elements of the human environment are either not present or would not be affected by the Proposed Action or the No Action Alternative:

Air Quality

Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs)  
Environmental Justice (EJ)  
Farm Lands (prime or unique)  
Floodplains  
Invasive, Non-Native Species  
Native American Religious Concerns  
Subsistence  
T&E Species  
Water Quality (Surface/Ground)  
Wetlands/Riparian  
Wild and Scenic Rivers  
Wilderness

1. Cultural Resources

The Dena'ina Athabaskans inhabited the western Kenai Peninsula around Cook Inlet to Iliamna Lake and inland to the Alaska Range. The lower end of GUA 09-04 was a boundary area for Dena'ina, Yupik, and Aleut speakers from Kodiak and Bristol Bay. Several transportation corridors occur in GUA 09-04. Travel focused upon routes from Cook Inlet to Iliamna and the larger rivers such as the Kvichak, Newhalen and Mulchatna.

The first Russian visit to the area was by accident. A Russian ship was blown onshore at Kamishak Bay in 1796. Subsequent historic settlement of the area by non-Native peoples has been sparse. During the turn of the century some mining was done along the coast but it was short-lived.

2. Wastes (Hazardous/Solid)

All operations utilize small amounts of fuel for cooking, heating and sometimes generators.

B. Soils:

Soils over this wide area range from very thin to non-existent on high, rocky mountain slopes to deep, very wet frozen organic soils around Lake Iliamna. In between these two extremes lie gravelly glacial till overlain by a layer of volcanic ash on mountain foot slopes, rolling moraines, outwash plains and old beach ridges. Poorly drained organic soils occur in depressions in these areas.

C. Wildlife:

The Mulchatna Caribou herd winters in the adjacent area and in GUA 09-04 and 09-02, and many widely dispersed animals remain in the region throughout the summer months. The open tundra habitats are also inhabited by brown bear. Individual bears are highly mobile, and may be encountered throughout the areas that both moose and bear hunts are conducted. Moderate to low densities of moose occur in shrub and mixed forest habitats. Wolves inhabit the region in association with prey animals, and range over the entire region. Wolverine are present in low numbers in the region. Some raptor species adapted to open environments and rocky outcroppings (rough-legged hawk, peregrine falcon, golden eagle, northern harrier, merlin, gyrfalcon) may be present. Resident and migrant land birds nest and feed in willow and alder and forest habitats, including neotropical migrant species.

IV. ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

A. Impacts of the Proposed Action:

1. Critical Elements:

a. Cultural Resources:

There will be no foreseeable impacts associated with cultural resources.

b. Wastes (Hazardous/Solid):

There is a possibility that small amounts of fuel could be spilled. Amounts are small and impacts limited as fuel rapidly evaporates.

2. Soils:

Impacts associated with aircraft landings and OHV use have the greatest potential to cause surface disturbance especially on wet erosion prone soils occurring on slopes underlain by permafrost. These fragile soils have a tendency to erode, especially on steep slopes, when the surface vegetation mat is disturbed. Some soil compaction will occur at camp sites.

3. Wildlife:

The harvest of bear, if excessive, in a relatively small area may reduce the area's bear population if recruitment rates are lower than harvest rates. In addition to the take of bears that is permitted by the Alaska Dept. of Fish and Game, the potential exists for bears to be attracted to hunting camps and kill sites of moose. These bear encounters may cause the take of additional bears for the defense of life and property. Other potential impacts to wildlife are habitat damage by vegetative destruction or modification by human use.

4. Vegetation:

Heavily used base camps could damage portions of the vegetative mat, expose soil to erosion, and degrade the naturalness of the site. Use of these sites in wet, muddy or breakup conditions could damage fragile vegetation or create erosion prone sites. Impacts will be short term as vegetation will re-establish once use stops.

B. Impacts of the No Action Alternative:

If no guiding takes place, no impacts to the environment are expected. Natural processes will occur without influences.

C. Cumulative Impacts:

Because the applicants' actions on public lands are limited, localized, and expected to operate under special stipulations and conditions, it is not expected that there will be any long term cumulative environmental impacts.

D. Mitigation Measures:

No mitigation measures are identified beyond those listed in the attached Stipulations and Conditions that are applied to each applicant.

V. CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION

A. Persons and Agencies Consulted:

State of Alaska, Department of Natural Resources - Letter of Concurrence

B. List of Preparers:

Donna Redding - Cultural, Historic, Paleontological  
Jeff Denton - Subsistence, T&E species, Wildlife  
Bruce Seppi - Wildlife, T&E, Riparian  
Debbie Blank - Vegetation  
Jake Schlapfer - Recreation  
Dave Doucet - Recreation  
Jim Moore - Realty/Lands